THE CONSCIOUS LIVING WORKSHOP:
INTEGRATING THE TMI EXPERIENCE INTO OUR LIVES

by Cam Danielson

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To describe the CONSCIOUS LIVING workshop, I need to summarize the adult development continuum that underlies its design. One of the findings of my research into the effects of long-term participation in TMI programs is the shift in self-perception for individuals who attend three or more programs compared with those who attend only the GATEWAY VOYAGE®. The finding is more remarkable when acknowledging the significance of the GATEWAY VOYAGE experience for both groups. "Life changing" is a common phrase I heard in my research. If that is true, what could possibly be more significant after three or more TMI programs?

The answer is the way individuals who attend multiple programs tend to organize their understanding of their experience compared with those who attend only the GATEWAY VOYAGE. In other words, every TMI program can be life changing, but, developmentally, it doesn't radically change the way we live our life *until we reach a tipping point*. At those times our internal navigation system shifts to incorporate a more expansive view of one's self and the world in which we live. We suddenly discover our older reference points are insufficient for the choices we now have.

To speak of people as works in progress implies that we are not yet at the end of our journey. Our ability to continue to evolve includes how we make meaning of our experiences (cognitively, emotionally, socially, and intrapersonally). Each stage in our journey is defined, among other things, by the way we orient ourselves in making decisions relevant to where we think we are going. For example, young adults have goals related to greater autonomy or independence. These include being employed (or educated), acquiring skills and knowledge important to a career, and developing deep personal relationships that may include marriage. However, when people continue well into their forties to talk about "what they are going to do when they grow up," they are trying to acquire a different perspective on their lives even if they don't yet have the language to do so.

The GATEWAY VOYAGE is a particularly powerful experience, because for many it comes at a time when they are in a state of transition about their identity and direction in life. And it isn't merely a function of a chronological period in our lives, but of our capacity and desire to embrace a more expansive view of life generally. This is why curiosity is such an important element in those individuals who continue to return to TMI over many years. It is the realization that there is more to life than we know, and to come to TMI is to expect the unexpected. Over repeated experiences at TMI individuals begin to shift again from the initial benefit of a particular inner "knowing" or guidance (life changing in itself), to the anticipation of shedding old beliefs as an ongoing process of change and transformation. What initially had been instrumental in the GATEWAY program to reshaping our idea of who we are is further revised after attending multiple TMI programs in the knowledge that no idea of who we are is an end in itself. This latter stage of development is the result of a deeper insight into our transpersonal nature. The ecstatic dimension of altered states of consciousness can be misleading because it is transitory. However, for those who have attended multiple programs, the acquired presence of an inner calm or peace is what remains even while engaged in the emotional highs and lows of daily existence. It isn't a single moment of enlightenment that makes the difference, but rather a series of experiences that finally add up to a shift in our center of gravity, where, as Joseph Campbell wrote, "the familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit." (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, NJ: Second Edition: Princeton University Press, 1971) p. 51.)

The CONSCIOUS LIVING workshop is designed to facilitate the personal integration of inner guidance for those whose "familiar life horizon has been outgrown." The gift that is TMI is many things, but a consistent theme in the research for those who have attended multiple programs is the feeling of coming home. The support, love, humor, and companionship that is part of the TMI gestalt is hard to translate, and, as a result, it easily becomes a private experience upon return to families and communities. And yet, what we carry inside of ourselves are the seeds of greater compassion, understanding, playfulness, and peace. How do we nurture these, give them the proper soil, care, and attention so that we see them grow in our lives? How do we live more consciously with the presence of inner guidance so that how we show up with others is consistent with our experience of ourselves at TMI?

The CONSCIOUS LIVING workshop provides a framework for a personal development practice built on autobiographical work, dialogue, and feedback. The red thread that runs through this process are the different Focus Levels. The practice is one of inner exploration and outer integration. The tension between the two is actively attended to as a means of inquiry. What are our unique gifts? For what purpose do we have these gifts? How well aligned is our life with our purpose? To explore such questions is to look at our lives in context, as a story. This is a profoundly human practice. Out of the intersection of the life

within and the life around us is a continually evolving perspective on what our story is about. Each stage in our development gives us new insights, abilities, and experiences, which add up to new ways to envision our story.
In this workshop, participants:

- Increase self-knowledge through autobiographical exercises and dialogue
- Learn to engage our higher selves in a practice of clarifying one's calling and/or the next phase of personal growth and development
- Learn to tell the new story about oneself in dialogue with others
- Complete a self-improvement plan to tap the unfulfilled potential of one's new story
- Begin creating a community of colleagues for support and further inquiry on actions taken after the workshop

The purpose of the Conscious Living Workshop is to help build a practice for inquiring into the question, “What do we do with our lives?” It is a question we never finish once and for all, but becomes the means for ongoing self-transformation. This is what our practice is meant to achieve. Alive within an infinite universe that is also alive, we are distinctive in our abilities to give voice to what we experience. The interchange of the two–the life around us and the life within–is an ongoing process of creation, change, and growth. “*Formation, Transformation/Eternal Mind’s eternal recreation*,” is how Goethe captured it. [*Faust, Part Two.* Trans. Philip Wayne. (London: Penguin Books, 1959) p. 79]